



2001 Wetlands Reserve Program

Program Focus

Many projects that NRCS provides technical and/or financial assistance for in Maine are done in partnership with other federal, state and local agencies and groups. Our wetland restoration efforts are no exception.

The salt marsh restoration project at Bates-Morse Mountain Conservation Area (BMMCA) in Phippsburg, Maine, a parcel of 574 acres of rare undeveloped barrier seacoast that Bates College manages, is one such project. The restoration reverses drainage work done on the Sprague River marsh as early as the 18th century. The digging of drainage ditches to facilitate cattle grazing diminished the value of the marsh environment to wildlife and encouraged growth of invasive plants, among other deleterious effects.

The BMMCA collaborated with the NRCS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, and other partners to return the marsh to its pre-colonial state. The work involved plugging old drainage ditches and removing other obstacles to water circulation. The first phase, in which approximately \$27,000 of WRP funds were used, has been completed. A new phase of the project will begin shortly.

"The salt marsh environment provides critical habitat for wildlife, fish, and nesting and migrating birds," stated Judy Marden, director of the BMMCA and of Bates College's Coastal Center. Although creating new marshes is impossible, "the restoration of those still relatively intact is vitally important in the conservation of the state's natural ecosystems and indigenous species", stated Ms. Marden.

Students and faculty from Bates and other institutions use the BMMCA for educational programs, scientific research and literary study. The area is also open to public visits that are consistent with its mission.

Maine Summary

Overview

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements.

Maine has nearly 7 million acres of wetland and other aquatic habitat, which represents approximately 30 percent of its surface area. Fortunately, the vast majority of these wetlands are still intact and functioning properly. However, the demand for WRP continues to be strong in regards to restoration of tidal salt marshes along Maine's coastline. These are the least abundant and historically the most manipulated wetlands in Maine. Numerous conservation partners have also identified these wetlands as needing restoration and have joined NRCS in addressing this need.

Accomplishments

In FY 2001 NRCS obligated over \$160,000 in 3 restoration cost-share agreements. These agreements will target restoration efforts on 193 acres of degraded salt marsh. Additionally, restoration of 30 acres of salt marsh was completed using WRP funds during FY 2001.

Program Benefits

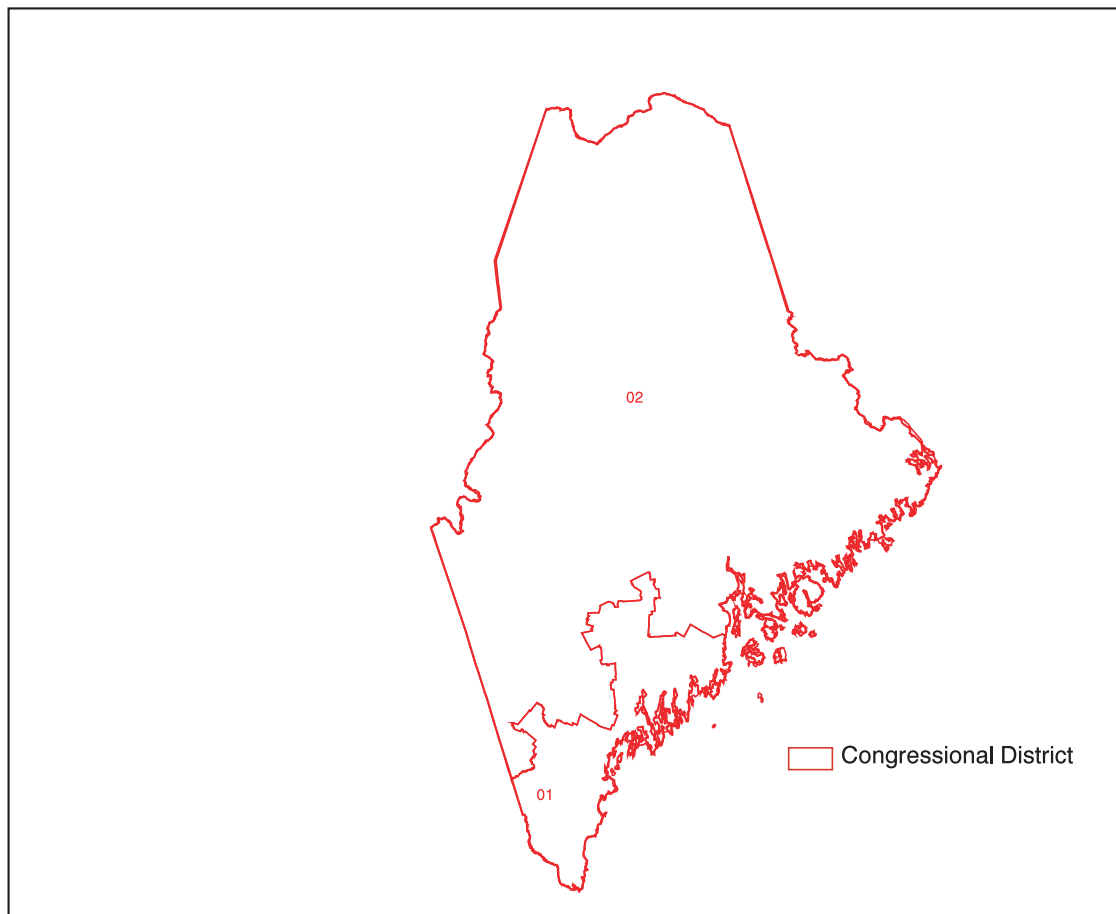
Tidal salt marshes in Maine provide a critical habitat for migratory waterfowl and shore birds using the coastal fly way. USFWS biologists have reported a sharp increase in the numbers of such birds using the restored marshes. Bird watchers from around the area are enjoying increased opportunities to view rare and endangered species.

State contact

Richard Baird, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, USDA NRCS, 967 Illinois Ave., Suite#3, Bangor, Maine 04401. Phone: 207-990-9100.



Maine Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District



Maine Dollars and Contracts

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2001		Cumulative Total (95-01)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 1	\$160,459	3	\$368,959	8
District 2	0	0	\$207,250	5
State Totals	\$160,459	3	\$576,209	13

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